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A LITERARY NEWSPAPER

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EDITORIAL

THE popular pastime of putting Nazi Germany on trial is becoming a bore. Dictatorships are functioning in Europe, and have been doing so long before the Austrian *Führer* decided to become a German. We do not recall any meetings of protest against Mussolini or Mustapha Kemal. Presumably, an oppressed Turk, whose desire to wear his fez is only equalled by the Jew's detestation of the ischiatic nerve, is a fellow-man, but dictators will be dictators. The unfortunate Matteotti was not quite so pathetically resigned as Van der Lubbe; he had been guilty of at least a few symptoms of courage and human intelligence. He, too, did not fit into the Fascist scheme of things. It is, unfortunately, true that intellectual fair play is not one of the outstanding features of dictatorships, whether Fascist, Communist or Hitlerite. The free play of the mind of ideas, is a lovely thing. But something of no interest to mobs.

Since the undivine principle of democracy has made way for a dream nearer to the mob's desire, we have been privileged to witness the triumph of dictatorship. In America this triumph has been bitterly resented. In this country our notorious affection for the Good, the True, the Beautiful, for Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, for the Pursuit of Happiness, has made us the self-sacrificing idealists of both hemispheres. Until 1929 we bore the brunt of Prosperity, of Easy Money, with unparalleled success. But since there are now only two cars in every garage and one steam yacht to every family, we are beginning to feel that something may be wrong with the world.

The first move, accordingly, is to consider the benighted state of Europe. So long as money was easy, our concern about Italian liberals was reduced to a minimum, and the fact that a Turkish lady blushed when deprived of her veil—a shameless proceeding—made every American girl in a night club feel that these Europeans (even Eastern Europeans) were out of date. But now we are seriously concerned. Die Herren Thomas und Heinrich Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, and so forth are all forced to live outside of Germany! The Reichstag fire was the occasion for a monstrous miscarriage of justice! Ever since it happened, we have been putting Hitlerism on trial with vast enthusiasm. We are determined that Communist Bulgarians shall have fair play. Our own fair trials of Communists are, of course, a model for the civilized world. When we were five thousand miles away from any danger—naval, military, or economic—we were quite as willing to take chances as Goering and Goebbels. Our sympathy for Debs was overpowering and we have never ceased to be active on behalf of Tom Mooney and, while still possible, Sacco and Vanzetti.

But now, as we fulminate in Madison Square Garden, we are in a superior mob position. That is, while we ask Germany to ignore her private problems and listen to the voice of humanity, we ourselves ignore, and have continuously ignored, every appeal by world opinion to the American sense of justice. Those who engage in the international sport of trying Germany must concede that they think their manifestations and manifestoes have some effect. Let it be granted. Then, there is justice (under pressure) in Nazi Germany. A violently anti-Communist country has acquitted three Communists! There is no such justice, with or without pressure, in the United States. The whole civilized world has protested against our brutalities, that is, our perfectly legal injustices. We have never been swerved from our purpose. An ineffectual playwright has said, *à propos* of the Scottsboro boys, "They shall not die!"

This is not an American slogan. We have proved more than once, as all democracies have proved, that each and every one shall die who dares to defy, differ, or in any way depart from the norm of a given mob's emotions.

THE BEST FICTION OF THE YEAR

"A Nest of Simple Folk," by Seán O'Faoláin.

Suggestion for an Acceptance Slip to be used by the average standard-size magazine:

The Editor regrets that this manuscript is pretty lousy and that the necessity of filling 128 pages month after month compels him not to return it.

With thanks.

THE LADY OF THE LAKE

by RICHARD SHARPE

THE only really sad part about Southern California is that the Chamber of Commerce and the City Government of Los Angeles believe their own lies. It is almost incredible that any body of sober politicians and sane business men could read the hyperbolic blurbs published about California without their collective tongues in their cheeks, but it is perfectly apparent that they do.

The chorus of all their hymns of praise has been the same as Oswald's last line in Ibsen's "Ghosts"—"The sun! The sun!" By the hypnotic effect of sheer repetition they have firmly convinced themselves that they dwell under an absolutely unclouded sky three hundred and sixty-five days out of the year, and that umbrellas, slickers, Sou'westers, rubbers and galoshes are as useless around Los Angeles as a fur coat in a furnace.

This is something of an exaggeration. There is no use carping at the climate, since it is quite lovely much of the time, and can produce occasional crystalline days of great beauty. But it cannot be denied that it does rain even in Los Angeles County, and when it does, look out! What you really need then is a pair of high rubber boots and a gondola.

The City Fathers, stern in their denial of any watering systems in Heaven, have equally sternly denied there was any necessity for drainage. "Why should we waste millions of dollars controlling our rivers?" they query. "Just look at them." They are, truly, extraordinary. For ten months out of the twelve, it is necessary to dredge to find any water in the Los Angeles River. It is a winding ditch, parched and white and sandy in the sun, arid as the Mojave Desert. The Arroyo Seco, which flows past Pasadena, proclaims its nature in its name, "Dry River." Most people cannot locate the Arroyo La Brea at all, although the present writer once lived beside it and, on one memorable February day of 1927, had to climb on to his bed to avoid wading in it; while his poor motor car, being in a garage four feet lower than the house, would have made a luxurious aquarium for rare fish, or even common ones.

It was in that year that visitors from the East began to suspect there was something wrong with the perceptions of the advertising writers. Alas for the good name of the city, there was a convention of Shriners encamped here, or perhaps it would be better to say they were anchored here.

After it had poured for a week, they invaded sporting goods stores with derisive hoots, and before the despairing eyes of the Boosters went canoeing at Seventh and Broadway, the main crossing in all Los Angeles' farflung area, fished from the windows of the Biltmore Hotel, and floated ducks around the entrance to the Alexandria.

It was a great joke, unless you happened to be one of the poor benighted souls who had to go to work every day. One young man, filled with unwonted ambition, was gathering rent ads for an evening newspaper. Wet to the waist, angry and dejected, he was crossing Figueroa Street (Grasshopper, in English) in the heart of Automobile Row. It was no longer a street. It was a gentle canal two feet deep, from building to building. Sidewalks were a thing of the past. There was also an excavation six feet deep in the street, made by the ever-busy Gas Company, carefully marked with red lanterns and saw-horses, but these had long since floated away. Hence, this young man came within an inch of being drowned on a main boulevard, and had it not been for the kindly offices of a cop and a taxi driver, would not be alive to be writing this.

Another spectacular scene was Wilshire Boulevard in front of the Ambassador Hotel, where there was a lake full of cars five feet under and where all traffic had to be detoured blocks south. Numbers of old residents—the sort who write letters to editors—began to mutter angrily that instead of Venice, California, being annexed and absorbed by Los Angeles, the reverse would be far more appropriate.

Such matters finally managed to dent the consciousness of the Authorities. Filled with dismay by the sarcasms of the Shriners, the murmurs of the civically virtuous, they voted themselves millions of dollars to build drains. Fantastic as it may seem, up to that time there had been practically no drainage in the entire city. Most streets merely had ditches at intersections which were expected to carry off the celestial donations. On a main street, a carping critic found one sewer-opening at every twelve blocks. In a capricious climate, given to almost anything from cloudbursts to convulsions, this is hardly sufficient.

The next five years, the climate was comparatively tame and dry. "See," said the City Council, "everything is under control." They were quite right. There was so little water to drain through successive seasons that that Fall saw an inferno of forest fires. Smoking was forbidden on any of the city boundaries. One of the city parks managed to cremate twenty-five men very neatly. For such dry weather, what sewer systems they had provided were more than adequate.

Came the last days of Anno Domini 1933.

On the thirtieth, a gentle drizzle began. But the skies were very dark. There were reports from the North of storm, coming fast. Old settlers, who had been here eight or nine years, took warning and equipped themselves with old clothes and all the paraphernalia of a sea captain on the bridge of a ship in a gale. They knew what to expect.

By four in the afternoon, their apprehensions were justified. After the approved fashion of Los Angeles storms, the heavens opened. It was not rain. It was solid water. The effect was of looking out of the windows of a submarine at the submerged city of Atlantis. If there were services in session at St. Paul's, or St. Vibiana's downtown, the appropriate music was Debussy's "La Cathédrale Engloutie."

It rained by fits and starts all afternoon, all night. New Year's Eve dawned on a great swamp which had previously been Los Angeles, Pasadena, Glendale, Hollywood, Montrose, *et cetera*. At noon it continued to pour uninterruptedly. Evening found the city, just as it had been six years before, a very good imitation of the Venetian Pearl of the Adriatic.

About this time, the rich Mrs. X—, of New York, going to the basement garage of her fashionable apartment building on Rossmore Boulevard let out one screech and almost drowned when she discovered herself up to the armpits in liquid muck, and the sixty-five expensive cars of the building's tenants completely submerged under eight feet of the muddiest waters ever seen west of the Mississippi.

The Los Angeles River, suddenly resurrected from its stony bed, became a torrent led by a wall of water ten feet high, and came zipping down its course, playfully bashing bridges miles out of place, rolling and burying occupied cars like children's hoops, chewing a corner off the property of the Grand Central Airport, nipping piece after piece out of Riverside Drive, smashing viaducts, aqueducts, railroad bridges, culverts, scattering the buildings of men like chaff, and carrying a débris of metal and cars and twisted wood and corpses clear to Long Beach twenty-five miles away. The Long Beachites have already threatened suit for this forced secession of large parts of Los Angeles to their territories. They have had enough corpses of their own.

In the La Canáda hills, water poured from all sides down into the little canyon leading to Montrose, a town between Los Angeles and Pasadena. There was a sort of check-dam overlooking the town, to prevent too great a drainage. Los Angeles County is wonderful at building dams placed where they can do the most harm. There is an enormous one poised just above Hollywood. It hasn't broken yet, but if it ever does, we are in for the largest crop of editorials and sermons on Sodom and Gomorrah since Vesuvius erupted and buried Pompeii.

This little dam above Montrose gathered more and more water, held it in restraint and infuriated it, until in one dreadful burst it passed over and on.

A week later, they were still unearthing bodies from beneath a thick layer of ooze and dirt. Hardly a house on the main street of the town was left intact. Most of them were unspeakable, ruined tombs.

Disasters seem to have a jolly way of occuring on holidays. St. Pierre, on the Island of Martinique, was destroyed by volcano on All Soul's Day, when the whole town was decorated and everyone was feeling very festive. In Montrose, families were holding yearly reunions, friends were celebrating the first legally drunken New Year's Eve for a decade and a half. There was almost no warning. They were whipped by the fury of the deluge directly from gaiety to death and tragedy. Mothers had children swept from their arms and smashed to death before their eyes on their own walls and furniture. One man had to spend New Year's Day digging in mud for his mother's body, whom he had been talking to the night before when the deluge struck.

For a few hours, sunshiny Los Angeles was an island in the continent. Every highway leading north, south or east was either impassable or highly dangerous. No trains moved in their regular tracks. While the ocean roared on the west side, frantic crews of men labored, and for a space of time the city was completely isolated.

The Authorities were at last shaken from their ruminative blindness, and began to shriek wildly for the Civil Works Administration in Washington to lend them thirty-three millions of dollars to build the sewers they should have built before they built the city. In the East, such a situation would be unthinkable.

"After all," say the Boosters, "only once in six years does it rain like this." But at the expense of scores of lives and millions in damages, it might be worth while to be prepared.

Of course, the picture is not all tragedy. One family, finding their house afloat at high speed on the roaring flood beneath them, resigned themselves to God, and awaited the end. Presently there was a bump. Five hundred yards from the site of their old home, they had come to rest like Noah on a peak, so they shrugged, dried their feet, and went back to bed.

A young married couple, bidden to a binge on New Year's Eve, called up to say that they couldn't come, as the wall which held up the hill back of their house had given way, and they were busily engaged in excavating for their Oriental rugs. They were not alone in that. Everywhere, people were anxiously exhuming pianos, digging up doghouses and whatnot. Mechanics were frantically drying out stalled cars with blow-torches, digging them out of the mud, towing them from the centers of lagoons. Street-cars were being jacked back on to their tracks and proceeding, with waves spreading fanwise behind them, down the paths of torrents. Families trudged over collapsed hills to their isolated houses like cows through bogs.

The leitmotif of the flood was, as usual, supplied by Mrs. Aimée Semple MacPherson Hutton, whose temple is across the street from, and several yards above the level of, Echo Park Lake. By New Year's Eve, there was a rushing moat around her corner. By New Year's afternoon, the temple could well have been mistaken for the palace of a lady Doge. The water spread clear from its base wall to the other end of the park in a solid muddy sheet. Aimée had become the Lady of the Lake.

Completely undaunted by what she called a "few drops of water," all day long the Temple was full of dripping worshippers who had waded to its doors and clambered over barricades of sandbags at its entrance, and of flat-footed Deaconesses preparing relief for the flood-sufferers. Throughout the whole period the Angelus Temple's radio incessantly demanded contributions for the relief work its Popess was performing.

It might be well if Los Angeles were to copy her example, and change its name accordingly. Today it is El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora La Reina de Los Angeles—the City of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels. It might be simpler to alter it to El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora del Lago—the City of Our Lady of the Lake.

THE BEST PROSE OF THE YEAR

Preface to George Bernard Shaw's "On the Rocks."

THE BEST PLAY OF THE YEAR

"Richard of Bordeaux," by Gordon Daviot.

I AM A PHI BETA KAPPA

by FLOYD TILLERY

Alpha of Alabama Chapter Phi Beta Kappa

THERE wasn't a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at the University the year I was graduated; one was installed, however, soon afterward. A few years later I was taken in on the basis of my "scholastic record, present achievement, and future promise." It would not be illuminating to spend any time on the two last clauses, but when it comes to my past record—days spent with Dear Old Alma Mater—that is something else.

To begin with, I went up to the University almost an illiterate, with just one year of standardized preparation. But, in that one year, I had made Honor Roll in the one-horse high school: because my Key to Cicero was the same edition as the teacher's, and there was a silent, scholarly understanding between us not to squeal on each other; because I could memorize the geometry theorems from day to day, and the instructor himself could not solve the originals, which were, therefore, omitted from the lessons; and because my sister, at home, worked out all the algebra problems for me and the entire Senior class. But I was graduated with cheers, and went up to the University to take the classical course without ever having studied Latin grammar, first year algebra, English composition, or science of any kind, and without ever having read a single piece of literature except "Macbeth," "Ivanhoe," and "A Tale of Two Cities."

I went up with fear and trembling. But when I had settled down amid the Great Halls of Learning, I soon realized—as ignorant as I was—that I was in the Land of Sham, bounded on all sides by mediocrity. I had left home dreading that I should be dismissed at the end of the first month's tests. I soon discovered, however, that I could easily make Honor Roll in all those University subjects which were brand-new to me, such as French, Greek, and history. Immediately I became ambitious. But very quickly I discerned the necessity of getting advanced credit in mathematics, physics, and English composition—prescribed subjects I knew I could not pass for lack of preparation. So, as ignorant as I was, I called on the Dean to explain why I thought I deserved "advanced credit in those elementary courses which my high school so thoroughly covered; courses which—"

Interrupting my forceful argument, curtly, impersonally, the Dean said: "You will have to see Dr. Blank, who is at the head of our science department, about this, and Dr. X about that, and Dr. Whatchermacallem about the other. Whatever they decide will be all right with me."

Calling at the various doctors' offices, I was told quite mechanically: "This is a matter for the Dean to decide. Whatever he says will be all right with me."

Dumb as I was, it came to me in a flash how to work a little trick like that on the cloistered intellectuals. And so, speedily, I contrived to get "credit" for nine hours of Freshman work. The rest of the way was easy. At the end of the first year I had made Honor Roll—an average of 90% in all my studies.

If I can recall correctly and report it honestly, I did not learn one thing during that first year. I merely memorized and bluffed my way through. I never thought once. As for its cultural value, as for any development of my character and personality, as for any vital preparation for tomorrow, my Freshman year at college meant absolutely nothing to me. And the other two years were but little better.

However, at the end of the third year I was graduated with an A. B. degree. I had majored in English. During my entire college course I never heard one "outside" book discussed in the classroom, or on the campus. I never read one modern novel or current review, not one newspaper or magazine. I never drew one book from the library to take to my living quarters. I went to the library only for required reference work. The only poems, essays, or stories which I read were the ones prescribed in the courses.

I came away from the University without having ever heard the names of Francis Bacon, Laurence Sterne, Joseph Addison, Boccaccio, Rabelais, Montaigne, Goethe, Balzac, Flaubert, and dozens of other classical authors. I did not know that such writers as William Blake, James Thomson, Oscar Wilde, and Baudelaire had ever lived. Of the moderns I knew absolutely nothing—not even of Herman Melville, Joseph Conrad, Stephen Crane, Anatole France, and Remy de Gourmont.

For three years, at Alma Mater, I used "Keys" to Latin and Greek—being ever unable to read a line in either language without the aid of my "pony." I crammed—for examination—the names of 46 philosophers, together with a two-line summary of each man's philosophy, and stamped myself as a scholar and a thinker. In higher mathematics I could memorize the daily work, but on the finals I made a zero. The professor, however, gave me a high grade, saying: "You simply had a brain-storm on the test. I know you know the subject."

In the Education courses I wrote reams and reams on my research work—words, words, words—always receiving an A grade and praise enough to give me paranoia, simply because of the bulk of the material. In Psychology the professor passed the entire class, because he felt he had "shot over our heads" on the examination questions. In History and Economics I was lucky enough to obtain second-hand books which had been "spotted." I memorized the "spots" and never failed to ring up a high score. But, certainly, not one of my professors had any valid proof that I was a scholar. And, as well as I can remember, not one of them did one thing to develop any function of my brain except that of memory. When I came away, I could not possibly have voiced an intelligent opinion on politics, literature, science, business, or life. Training in such matters was not in the curriculum, not in the classrooms, not on the campus.

At the same time I must have been fairly average and normal. I "made" the best drinking social fraternity on the campus, though I was a teetotaler; was chosen president of the Freshman class; belonged to a number of campus organizations; went out for track team and played class football; took an active part in dramatics; won a $250 scholarship on my academic record; was named business manager of the college weekly, with a $250 subsidy; and was always treated kindly and respectfully by the faculty and the student body. But the point is this: I entered the University practically an illiterate, and came away very little better off. I am blaming no one but myself. But I am an A. B. and a Phi Beta Kappa.

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WORDS OF CAESAR

by BRANCH CABELL

WHEN they crowded about you, Caesar, the last faces which you saw upon earth, and in the chill March sunlight three and twenty knives were a-glitter—waveringly, in a confused onset, so perturbed by their victim's greatness that your half-panic-stricken murderers cut and mangled not only you but one another also,—then there was yet time to enrich the back of the dictionary with one more classical quotation. You seized that chance, you who let slip few chances. You cried out, in the instant that Marcus Brutus, your youthful well-loved protégé, was seen to have drawn his sword against you, "And you also,—my son, Brutus!"

That, Caesar, was finely said. Than this brief acknowledgment of paternity, in these exact circumstances, nothing could have been more dramatic, more simple, more poignant, or more easily memorable—which, after all, is a chief point to be regarded by the great in selecting their dying words.

Thereafter, it is recorded, drawing up your robe before your face, you expired with extreme dignity, in the Senate House at Rome, in the precise centre of the terrene stage, before a large and select audience of earth's very foremost notabilities. With such neatness was all contrived that you fell just in front of Pompey's statue, like a proffered sacrifice to the *manes* of him from whom you had wrested the world. As you his destruction some four years earlier, so now he supervised yours. And to complete everything, Marcus Brutus, the child of that Servilia whom you had loved in youth, had been quite unwittingly your son, until the instant he became your murderer. No death scene, in brief, was ever better stage managed than when chance thus happily led up to the superb theatrical situation with which you made your exit.

And yet time—which, in the cliché, at least, tests all—time has brushed aside your last words (along with your once famous epigrams, "The die is cast" and "I came, I saw, I conquered") as an utterance in no deep sense characteristic. And chance, Caesar, all-treacherous chance, has fostered among us doubt if upon this high occasion you did actually light on *le mot juste*. We have begun to feel that you who died with such savoir faire, at the bright crest of your fame and of earthly omnipotence, as an acknowledged immortal, ought to have foreseen a bit more clearly the nature of this immortality.

That your nescience was human, one grants—and, indeed, it may have been unavoidable. Even had affairs so fallen out as to restrict you to a more trite ending, upon a leisurely death-bed of the sort favored by Lytton Strachey and regrettably futilized by his imitators, it appears doubtful that, in the customary three pages of reminiscences through which so very many famous persons have of late years travelled backward to infancy, you would have remembered to include your enduring achievement. To Cleopatra (who would by this time have been your fourth wife) and to your beloved Brutus, weeping at the bedside, you would have said, we know, something heroic and well-chosen and wholly adequate, with the tact of a skilled diplomat rising handsomely to the occasion. But it seems improbable that even then, in such more happily unhurried mortuary moments, Gaius Julius Caesar would have remarked, "All Gaul is divided into three parts."

Yet it is by these words, Caesar, that you have been immortalized, by these words alone you are remembered among us. So unpredictable are fate's workings that, in our later and lesser times, we employ the political propaganda which you called your "Commentaries on the Gallic War" as a school book. And the simplicity of language with which, as became an accomplished politician, you were careful to address the unlettered, but voting, lower classes has well earned for you the distinction of being that Roman writer against whom our young may charge most hopefully in the opening skirmish with Latin syntax. Thus is it brought about that, in the freely impressionable hours of childhood, no great while after learning that Jack Sprat could eat no fat and that George Washington cut down a cherry-tree, each one of us acquires likewise the knowledge that all Gaul is divided into three parts: and these maxims abide with us throughout life.

No one of us, Caesar, at any future time forgets your initial statement—or, at any rate, the first part of it. (Many memories, I admit, do skid at "of which the Belgians" and so on.) We recall forever that it was Caesar who said, "All Gaul is divided into three parts."

Nor may the pensive begrudge you, Caesar, your enduring fame: fame here was merited; for that in the greatness of your multiform achievements, and in the variousness of your talents, you exceeded all other men who have worn mortality, appears hardly disputable. In considering you, the one difficulty is to light on any re in which Caesar did not excel. For you were not only the chief executive, the world's king, and the military commander who had led armies into all known countries, without ever finding defeat. One recalls that, beginning life as a highly thought-of clergyman, you became equally looked-up-to as a criminal lawyer, in extensive practise, besides being famous as an orator; that you were a virtuoso of every liberal art, and the most popular of seducers among the less scrupulous sex, as well as among your own sex; that you were an applauded poet, a well-thought-of astronomer, and the peerless war correspondent of your day; that you were a conceded authority on sewage, published a first-rate treatise upon rhetoric, and founded a dozen or two cities. All things, in brief, were possible to you, Caesar, who wrote our calendar, as it were, with one hand and organized the world's first police department with the other, in the same instant that you were being worshipped as a god, with your own private shrine, in the temple of Quirinus. Not even in the politician's most delicate art of embezzlement had you any serious rival.

This much, O lordliest of all humankind, one can recall idly, upon the spur of the moment, without bothering to consult Plutarch, or Suetonius, or any encyclopædia, so that a little research work may complete the list of your unexampled exploits. For the point is that no one of these doings has mattered a bean's worth. Out of all this splendor, as the lean product of mankind's supreme achievement in the way of mortal living, survive just seven words; and the one memento of the greatness of Gaius Julius Caesar, the most mighty of human heroes, remains the not even true statement that all Gaul is divided into three parts.

THE BEST CARTOON OF THE YEAR

Low, in *The Nation*, "A Consignment of Culture to the Barbarians."

UNDERGRADUATES

by THOMAS BEER

FROM Forty-Second Street to Mamaroneck I was sickened by the conversation of two Harvard undergraduates at my table in the dining-car. They meant everybody in hearing to know that they had been at a smart dance, the night before, but they discussed the dance with precisely the awe and passion shown by Middle-Western women discussing the love-life of Hollywood. So I went into the smoking-car and settled beside an elderly clergyman, who was reading "England, Their England." Across the aisle sat four Yale undergraduates. Two of them were Seniors. The other two may have been Sophomores, Seniors or Juniors. One, I suspect, was a Philadelphian. He was reading a textbook. His number in this report is 1. Number 2 was reading a newspaper. Number 3 was chewing gum. Number 4 was watching the landscape.

Number 2. *(suddenly)* Hey, this bastard says flapper's a stale pre-war Anglicism!

Number 1. *(not interested)* It is English.

Number 2. Hell it is!

Number 1. Yes, it is. It's English.

Number 2. Hell it is!

Number 1. *(still not interested)* Oh, all right.

Number 3. I don't think it's English.

Number 2. And it isn't pre-war! This bastard says it's stale pre-war.

Number 4. I think it's pre-war.

Number 2. Hell it is!

Elderly Clergyman. *(pleasantly and easily)* Do you mind if I interrupt? Flapper is a pre-war expression in England. I know that because I heard it in a play in London in 1911. I remember it very well because a boy in the play—*(He means Bill in "Lady Patricia")*—had to explain it to some middle-aged person. So it's as old as 1911 at any rate.

Number 2. *(with perfect biandness)* The hell it is!

Number 1. *(quickly)* Thank you, sir!

Number 3. I don't think it's pre-war.

Number 1. *(quickly, to Number 3)* Give me a match, please.

(Having been sufficiently insulted by Numbers 2 and 3, the elderly clergyman read again. Number 4 began a desultory monologue on hockey. Number 2 interrupted him.)

Number 2. Is this "Anthony Adverse" a novel or a biography?

Number 3. Biography.

Number 1. Novel.

Number 2. Who wrote it?

Number 4. Dreiser. He writes the long ones.

(This, apparently, is humor. Numbers 2, 3 and 4 laugh. Enter from the dining-car Numbers 5 and 6. Number 6 is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He does not speak. He bawls. The newcomers settled on arms of the seats occupied by the first four. Number 6 is asked where he was last night. His family took him to "Ah, Wilderness!" He did not like it because of the character named Arthur. Arthur is supposed to be a Yale undergraduate. In the view of Number 6, Mr. O'Neill had no right to make Arthur a priggish bore. Number 6, by the way, is incapable of saying "You've got to" or "They've got to." He says "You got to" and "They got to." . . . As a matter of course, Number 2 interrupted him.)

Number 2. Who's Dashiell Hamlet?

Number 6. Hammett. He wrote "The Maltese Falcon."

Number 2. Oh, yeh. Read 'at.

Number 4. *(à propos of absolutely nothing)* Hey, a man told one last night.

(He then told the episode of the tutor from the "Satyricon," laying the scene of the affair in a hotel at Cannes. Number 1 became bored.)

Number 1. That's older than known history. It's in Petronius.

Number 6. No, it isn't.

Number 1. Yes, it is.

Number 6. You got to show me 'at. Hey, what's that you're whistling?

Number 5. *(He had been whistling beautifully)*. "Bolero." Ravel.

Number 6. Pretty good.

Number 5. Popular. Ravel's not awf'ly good.

Number 6. I thought he was.

Number 5. No, not awf'ly.

Number 4. *(à propos of nothing, absolutely)* I can't see 'at Katharine Hepburn's good lookin'.

(Nobody cared. The train stopped at Bridgeport and went on. Number 5, beautifully, began to whistle "O Sommo Carlo!" from Verdi's "Ernani").

Number 1. What is that?

Number 5. Dunno. Heard it on a boat.

The Elderly Clergyman. *(timidly)* I think it's from Verdi's music to Victor Hugo's "Hernani."

Number 5. Thank you! I'll look it up.

Number 6. *(à propos of nothing whatever)* My father was sayin', last night, they got to get rid of the depression by removin' non-constructive forces. He was sayin' he'd run all these Russian Jewish critics that started this thing right out of the country.

(I hoped for more of this, but nobody cared. It fell dead).

Number 2. *(to Number 3)* Know any men at Dartmouth?

Number 3. I know a man there or at Williams.

Number 2. I meant Dartmouth.

Number 3. I'll look in my address book. I've forgotten his name, but I know he put his name and all that in my address book. I'll look.

Number 4. God, I hate winter!

Number 1. That settles it.

Number 4. Yeh, but I do hate winter!

Number 1. We'll have it stopped.

Number 6. *(à propos of nothing, nothing, nothing)* I don't see anything in those Gilbert and Sullivan shows. I think they're blah. You got to have some life in a show. I don't see anything in those Gilbert and Sullivan shows.

But nobody cared. The train stopped at New Haven. They got off. Number 5 smiled at the clergyman and said, "'Bye, sir!" This clergyman helped me to correct my notes of the conversation. Then we had an interesting talk with a tipsy cigar salesman and a bankrupt farmer.

The Editors of The American Spectator, noting that Rabbi Stephen S. Wise at the Hitler trial in Madison Square Garden a few weeks ago cried out, "Thank God, the Jews are now not the only victims of Hitler!", move to inquire just what there is in that to make a man of the cloth so comradely cheerful and to thank God about.

DOLLARS AND PRIMA DONNAS

by IRVING R. SUSSMAN

Former Editor The Musical Observer, and Chief Staff Writer The Musical Courier and Musical Digest

DURING one of her more nympholeptic moments several years ago, Mary Garden made a public estimate that it required sixty thousand dollars in cold, hard cash to build up a career for any potential prima donna who was already gifted with those divine attributes which make for success in the music world. Miss Garden neglected to add the illuminating corollary that this amount was more than any serious singer who applied herself strictly to her job could hope to put by during a lifetime of operatic work and concertizing.

It is not often that the wages of a prima donna become a matter of public knowledge. Such a thing happened, however, a few years ago, when Lily Pons was sued by Guy and Maria Zenatello (the impressarios who had brought her to America) for the fifteen percent of her gross earnings which she had contracted to pay over. The singer's hard luck story, as soberly reported in detail by the New York *Times*, read somewhat as follows (my own condensation): she grossed, let us say, a hundred thousand a year; she paid:

To her old singing teacher (by a contract made before she became a star), five percent of her gross earnings;

To her impresarios, fifteen percent;

For concert management (Metropolitan Musical Bureau), thirty percent;

For necessary publicity, ten percent (her yearly average is about $15,000);

For personal representative (Bruno Zirato), five percent;

For traveling, accompanists, coaching, etc., fifteen percent (a very low estimate).

Before this eminent singer touched the check that was supposed to represent her fee, eighty percent of it had already spent itself for the necessary and budgeted expenses of her season.

The amazing story continues. Miss Pons was a figure in the social salons of the world: that meant the engagement of a secretary, a maid or two, a chauffeur. The charities came to call, and what public figure can afford to turn them out empty-handed?

This is veritably the story of any great prima donna's "break" in the music world. Miss Bori, Miss Rethberg, Miss Ponselle might tell a similar one. Prima donnas are split up more ways than Primo Carnera.

Much incredulous whistling is done whenever the estate of some expired luminary of a former day is made public. Similarly, a glance into the bank-book of almost any noted singer of to-day might prove a revelation to anyone crediting at a gulp the tales of the fabulous fees which they receive for their art. The major slice of the increment which manages to adhere to the personal accounts of most eminent musicians has come to them from teaching or royalties on compositions and discs or from other sources which greedy managers cannot quite get their hands on. It may well amount to a prime object among singers to get a reputation that will allow them some day to charge large tuition fees for initiating young and innocent prima donnas into the musical fold. The songbirds of yesteryear—the Schumann-Heinks and the Sembrichs—are only now reaping their just financial rewards for the years of glorious art they dispensed in their primes.

Silent, persuasive, at the gates the music entrepreneurs await those who have both talent and financial backing, and the most distressing part of it all is the fact that an access to a place in the musical sun cannot be had without recourse to them. The business of getting concert and opera engagements is sewed up tight as a drum. Just as there is no conductor who can stand on a podium before the New York Philharmonic-Symphony, the St. Louis Symphony, or most of the major American ensembles, without the personal say-so of Arthur Judson, there is no prima donna who can make a living out of singing without the management of one of two or three music managements, who seem to work in cahoots.

Are these services bound to be rendered gratis or even at a reasonable percentage? The fact that the National Broadcasting and Columbia Broadcasting Companies have the business of concert bookings almost exclusively under their wings throughout America would seem to imply that concert management is not plied for what the columnists used to term "cigar coupons." There is the story that it cost the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce seventy-five thousand dollars to get its songbird into the Metropolitan. There can be no doubt now that the bills additionally tendered "for flowers, etc." were considerably taxing. The rate is generally three hundred dollars a performance. Ex-president Machado of Cuba may be able to scotch the gossip that several years ago he sent to an American manager a check for thirty thousand dollars to promote the career of a Cuban soprano who was well thought of down there. The thirty thousand proved not enough to land her anywhere.

How direct a bearing this state of affairs has on young American women who have the ardent desire to make an operatic name for themselves they soon find out. It is a solemn indication that the time is past (if it ever existed) when a first-rate talent, a thorough musical education and the unquenchable ambition to succeed can obtain for the possessor a place in the music world; or, granting that the place is bought, repay financially for the years of work and the monetary investment that go into the making of an artiste.

There is positively no room in the operatic world of to-day (there will surely not be for years to come) for any pretender to fame and a public who cannot have her way financed with plenty of capital. The concert and opera promoters certainly won't lay out the cash. There are already too many exceptionally proficient artists singing to-day, who have reputations and can pay for their careers, to admit new ones who bear no gifts or some token that will make the managing of them worth-while.

Money—cash—is the most essential ingredient of the recipe that makes the operatic star. Even after stardom is achieved, the prospects of putting by enough out of earnings to balance the venture financially are very slim indeed.

There is no instance in the history of any major opera company where a singer paid back her sponsor in full, or financed her own way to fame on the money she earned *en route*. It cannot be done.

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United Artists' copy for the motion picture, "Palooka."

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—Harry K. Dorsett.

THE MOVIE USHER

by HARRY ALTSHULER

Alumnus, Usher Personnel Stanley Theatre, Philadelphia

MOVIE ushers come from everywhere. Some are illiterates who dropped out of the school system as soon as the age limit permitted. Some are college boys spending a vacation. Some have flunked out of two or three colleges. Some are boys from the country, drifting, who keep the job a few months and then move on. Many are relatives of the manager, or of the manager's friends. Some are youths from other departments of the motion picture industry, who must learn the service end before they are eligible to become managers.

Most are natural recruits, fitted for no other work by our school system. Indeed, our schools would seem to have been planned for the express purpose of training movie ushers.

The idea, in both public schools and in ushering, is to learn a set of supposedly infallible rules. Once these rules, which must never be questioned, have been memorized, there is no more work for the brain. Each rule, of course, has its accompanying phrase which must be learned by rote; then, whether the situation to be dealt with is an earthquake or a squalling brat, one simply and automatically releases the correct abracadabra phrase and all is solved. Do not ask, "But suppose the phrase doesn't work? What then?" That is heresy.

The individuals—and this is what sets off the movie usher from any other type of menial—lose themselves, merge their identities into a unit prating about Service. As individuals they are hypocritical; as a combination, sincere. They become rah-rah boys, talking up outside the virtues of whatever picture the theatre happens to be showing; thrilling when the theatre is crowded although it means more work, more trouble for themselves, with no greater recompense.

Movies become an obsession with them. They live, talk, and think movies. It is the stock joke, but I have often seen ushers, when they found themselves with a few hours off, ask for a pass to another movie house in the company's chain.

Their conversation is largely made up of lines from the pictures shown by the theatre. Hearing the lines as many as forty-two times a week, it is hardly surprising that they stick in the memory.

Thus, the ushers' conversation often becomes a jargon not understandable to outsiders. If someone should ask, "Who do you think you are?", I should still be tempted to reply, "My name is Kurt von Housen, first lieutenant, Royal and Imperial Artillery, and I am not in the habit of giving explanations to anyone, particularly to gentlemen of the navy!" That, a line from some ridiculous Helen Twelvetrees picture, was a favorite among us for a while. We used it with appropriate gestures on every possible occasion.

When a new usher is hired, Cohen—inevitably the Chief of Service is named Cohen—gives him a book to study which contains, carefully worked out, every possible situation in which an usher may find himself, and the proper phrase by which he can extricate himself gracefully.

One never says "customer." Those who pay admission are always called "patrons," and are unvaryingly assumed to be "ladies" and "gentlemen."

When a man and woman, instead of watching the screen, clutch each other so heartily that other patrons are amused, the usher stands in the aisle and stares, attempting to make them feel uncomfortable. If mere staring produces no results, he approaches and says, "I beg your pardon, sir, is the lady ill?"

Immediately they will unclutch and sit up, stuttering negatives.

When a drunk is seated in the theatre, talking out loud or otherwise creating a disturbance, the usher goes to him and says (formula number 24a), "I beg your pardon, sir, there is a Mr. Brown who wishes to see you in the lobby."

If he falls for it, the manager gives him a refund and throws him out. If he says, "Nerts, I don't know any Mr. Brown," the usher leans close to him and whispers (formula number 24b), "Say, mister, there's two beautiful dames waiting for you outside!" That's bound to get him.

When there is what the book rather grandiloquently calls a "Moral Degenerate" and the ushers more familiarly term a "feeler" annoying some woman in the audience, the usher scoots like hell for the manager, and the manager will probably scoot like hell for the husky red-headed barker who used to be a Marine. This ex-Marine has to slug on the average of two a week.

On Tuesday nights there are pep meetings. The ushers are inspired, exhorted, and bawled out. If they do not show the proper spirit, they are warned of impending dismissals. A favorite threat of the manager's is, "I've got to cut down the staff. The first man that makes a mistake, or doesn't coöperate—goes out!"

There is much talk about Service, much talk about Courtesy. The individual ushers relate incidents of how they helped patrons

(*Continued on Page 3, Col. 1*)

THE BEST NEWSPAPER REPORTING OF THE YEAR

Birchall's dispatches to the New York *Times* from Berlin and Vienna.

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THE MOVIE USHER

(Continued from Page 2, Col. 4)

and how they refused gratuities. They always refuse gratuities—when the manager is watching.

Not all incidents are aired at these pep meetings. One which magnificently illustrates the boasted "Courtesy" comes to mind:

It was 10:45. The last showing of the feature was on. The cashier and ticket-taker had gone. I was on duty in the lobby, to see that no "crashers" got in. A middle-aged man carrying a suitcase came up to me and asked, "Where can I buy a ticket?"

"Sorry, sir. No more tickets are being sold tonight. The last showing of the feature started twenty minutes ago."

A half dollar gleamed in his hand. "I have to make a train at twelve o'clock. I've nothing to do till then. Can you let me in?"

I reached for the coin. In time, I glanced inside the door. The assistant manager was standing there, his back toward me, but he would see the man entering.

I turned back. "I'm sorry, sir, I can't accept tips, but I'll see what I can do for you." The assistant manager heard my voice and looked around. I signaled to him. He came out and I explained. He beckoned to the Chief of Service.

"Go up to the office and get a ticket for this gentleman," he said.

The Chief of Service departed. I stood there. The gentleman stood there. The assistant manager stood there.

Ten minutes since the Chief of Service went up. The assistant manager became impatient and went after him. He, too, was gone a long time. I heard a series of curious thumpings emanating from the general direction of the manager's office. The horrible truth dawned on me.

The ticket safe! The key is stuck in the lock again! The Chief of Service is holding the safe and the assistant manager is kicking at the lid.

The manager heard the thumpings and hurried up to the office. The noise ended. The three came down the stairs deep in discussion and approached the gentleman who still waited patiently, suitcase in hand.

The assistant manager's brow was damp. The Chief of Service nursed a bruised finger. I knew by their expressions that the safe had resisted all their efforts.

The manager put on his brightest smile and came forward. He stopped before the waiting gentleman. He spoke.

"You needn't bother with a ticket. Step right in. I'll be very glad to extend to you the courtesy of this theatre."

I have remarked that the movie ushers come from everywhere. They go everywhere, too. But one who will be here in our theatre forever is Horowitz. He is the captain, and the only person in the theatre who is satisfied with his job. He will never rise higher in the business but, even if he realized this, I doubt if it would bother him very much.

Let us consider his blessings:

To the girls in the neighborhood where he lives, his saturnine, Mephistophelian features are handsome.

His clothes, though cheap, are natty. His hair is always slicked back.

When he walks into the locker room we jump to our feet and stand at attention. With a patronizing air he borrows a cigarette. (He borrowed at least a pack a week from me.)

He hands his black and white shoes (bought at bargain in his brother-in-law's shoe store) to one of the boys and indolently commands, rather than requests, "Clean 'em up, will you?" And perhaps he condescends to join the conversation.

Sublime, indeed, are the moments on the floor after a big "break" when, if a sufficient number of patrons watch him, he will rush back and forth, give scores of unnecessary orders, and shift the ushers from aisle to aisle.

See the dozen boys scurry about at his command! Handsome he is, and powerful. What more could he desire?

BOYD DIGESTS THE BOOKS

"HOW ODD OF GOD: An Introduction to the Jews." (*Lewis Browne.*) New York: The Macmillan Company. $2.50—This is not the first time that the learned ex-rabbi has attempted to tell us something rational about the Chosen People, surely a noble ambition, in view of the pap usually fed to Jew and Gentile alike. Dr. Browne points out that Yahveh finally decided to choose only two tribes of Judah for His special purposes, surrendering ten tribes of Israel to fate and the Assyrians, and leaving the Lost Tribe to turn up as Irishmen, much to the confusion of all theology. He rightly insists that medievalism will never solve the Jewish problem, that de-urbanization is a step in the right direction, but rather cruelly recommends Palestine as a place of permanent residence. Why, even tourists are revolted, and return hating, Jew and Arab alike!

"Rediscovering America." (*Harold Stearns.*) New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation. $2.00—Mr. Stearns once asked "What Can a Young Man Do?" and proceeded—unnecessarily—to do it, *viz.*, depart from this dreary, gin-sodden, Puritanical Greenwich Village life to its exact equivalent in highly moral Paris. Finally tiring of the restraints of the Left Bank and the conversation of Malcolm Cowley and other expatriates of that period, he came back and discovered that America was comparatively civilized. The result is a strange hodge-podge, in which a distinct nostalgia for France is discernible, incomprehensibly so, since the author rejoices in his American manhood and in American womanhood. Maybe Mr. Stearns only really likes whatever place he happens not to be living in.

"Nijinsky." (*Romola Nijinsky.*) New York: Simon and Schuster. $3.75—If it is possible to enlist sympathetic interest in a male dancer who gets into a triangle with his wife and the other man, the latter not being interested in Madame, then this feat has been achieved in this remarkable life of a great dancer. Diaghileff is the villain of the piece, and for fourteen years the dancer of "Petrouchka," "L'Après-midi d'un Faune," and the "Spectre de la Rose" has been in a Swiss sanitarium unable to explain what it was all about. From the day when she contrived her inconceivable crush on a dancing man, to whom she could not make herself understood in any language, up to the moment of his eclipse in insanity, Madame Nijinsky has been loyal to her (is it?) primeval instinct. As an account of the hey-day, the last glow, of the great dancing tradition, and as a tableau of the life of the higher neurotics, this book has something of the pathological absurdity of Mabel Dodge's "Lorenzo in Chaos," plus an exhibition of a bravery and integrity of ideals totally lacking in that dreadful work of retrospection.

"Walt Whitman in England." (*Harold Blodgett.*) Cornell University Press. $2.50—Being the poet of American Democracy, the camarado, and so forth, Walt Whitman had to accept the dismal fact that English university professors and people of the precise type whom he ridiculed and despised were his first and most ardent admirers. Edward Dowden got into very hot water, when teaching in the most respectable of Dublin's schools for the daughters of gentlemen, when he joined the father of W. B. Yeats and others in welcoming the singer of the body electric. Here is a full account of the goings-on when England (including—very prominently—Ireland) became Whitman-conscious. The Britisher, Robert W. Service, however, still continues to be the poet of American Democracy.

"Introduction to Keyserling." (*Mercedes Gallagher Parks.*) London: Jonathan Cape. 7/6—A fervent admirer of Germany's greatest pseudo-philosopher has produced a work which ought to be of vast usefulness to women's club members and lecturers. The "sage of Darmstadt" is presented in all his incomparable hollowness and his serious critics are duly excommunicated in a concluding chapter. Ernest Seillière, for example, who was the first to prick the Keyserling bubble, is accused of "heavy-handed sarcasm," Will Durant is dubbed an echo of Seillière (which may well be true), and Maurice Boucher is flatly accused of trying to introduce "logical sequence" into Keyserling's maunderings—obviously a fatal blow and naturally resented. On the other hand, a contributor to the *Methodist Times* is extolled as the kind of mind to which Keyserling appeals. Miss Parks knows her Keyserling.

"The American Spectator Year Book." (*Various Contributors.*) New York: Frederick A. Stokes. $2.75—The end of a perfect year.

WOMEN AND NOVELS

by EVELYN SCOTT

THOSE who fancy they are strong will be influenced by those who know themselves weak only when the subjugated set themselves to ascertain what is frail in the mighty. Such personal experiments encourage "disillusion", and women, who have seldom enjoyed the luxury of fooling themselves about facts, very often enviously resent those who do. Distinguished women writers have seldom possessed a romantic vocabulary or allied themselves, more than distantly, with romantic movements. The weak are, habitually, more reasonable before actuality than the strong ever need to be, and most women writers, sufficiently liberated intellectually to deal freely with the material of the circumscribed feminine existence, have been realists.

For a long time compelled to utilize, for art, stuff too meager for their capacities, they have also distrusted direct emotional release, fearing it as self-betrayal. They have not often been painters or musicians, because they have grown up without tutelage for the control of those mediums. They have not (since Sappho), until very recently, been good poets, because, in most of them aversion to thorough-going romanticism has dammed the lyric outlet.

Then, too, for a subjective exercise such as poetry, the individual needs an occasion for retreat into himself, with irresponsibility toward practical demands. Women have rarely had this. The romantic sublimely and whole-heartedly accepts life described by some ideal insignia. Frequently this involves a disregard for the physical points at issue at the moment. And women, who must conserve the flesh and delay even inevitable disasters, have not often felt a call either to prophesy against nature or to issue manifestos for beauty.

The exclusive attribute of romanticism is power of personality immediately expressed, and I recollect but two women writers who command the force of articulate emotion often associated with male genius. The women are Emily Brontë and "Henry Handel Richardson." Emily Brontë has all the ear-marks commonly admitted for the romantic, while "Henry Handel Richardson" deals in facts with a grimness identified with the naturalistic school, behind which there was, after all, the romantic impulse.

In Emily Brontë are a few indications of the distorting proportions given the trivial when experience is limited to the "feminine sphere." In "Henry Handel Richardson," a very great woman, also, one finds an inspired capacity for keeping life to such dimensions as engulf what is merely womanly in what is catholic and human, and without loss of imagination toward either sex. Circumstances and contemporary influences, as much as temperamental distinctions, may account for the difference in these writers which, in the first instance, still insists that the femininity of a genius be remembered and, in the other, allows it to be forgotten.

Yet, if one dare posit a norm for exceptional people, talented women from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf, exhibit, without being abstract, distinctions of a cerebral order. They have the shrewdest sense of character, the most aristocratically just style, but there are not many who write with passion untrammeled and the force of a will immediately articulate. The realist dissects: his emotions function to refine and are companioned by the operations of his mind. From his first-hand ardors he prefers to distil something exquisitely civilized. Sensitive men, who are, perhaps, in a material way, children of auspicious birth, often tend to develop art along those lines.

But the romantic proclaims a synthesis, and however his art may hinge on the conclusions of reasoning, his approach to his subject matter never insists on just measure of what already exists as the primary impulse behind his creation. The romantic always reveals a certain kinship with the primitive.

The work of Virginia Woolf is a paradoxical example, in the

(Continued on Page 4, Col. 1)

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Does Russia stand to lose more from American propaganda within its borders than America stands to lose from possible Russian propaganda here? A fresh point of view ably expressed.

GERMANY SINKS INTO SLAVERY
By S. MILES BOUTON
The Germans, Mr. Bouton says, are a singularly unpolitic, unrealistic, and fickle people, ever ready to lick the boots of whatever brazen man manages to get to the top. The Third Reich of Hitler, he argues, is doomed, but whether its end will come through revolution or war remains to be seen. If it be war, that will also be the end of Germany.

THE PLANLESS ROOSEVELT REVOLUTION
By LAWRENCE DENNIS
Mr. Dennis says that the President has no definite plan of action, and without a plan there is no revolution. One set of White House spokesmen is clamoring for higher prices, another is clamoring for lower prices; some are for economic nationalism, and others are for economic inter-nationalism. Mr. Roosevelt himself has made statements which fit him into all four groups. One of the most vigorous onslaughts upon the New Deal which have yet been published.

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WOMEN AND NOVELS

(Continued from Page 3, Col. 3)

present, of high art still obscurely restricted, for its materials, to life in the "woman's sphere." Her lovely feeling for form, her vision, so truly in æsthetic terms, should put her ahead of Proust, yet of the raw stuff to be modeled by her genius she has less than Jane Austen. Seemingly, Mrs. Woolf, who has the eyes of a sort of angelic seer, looks on a world of which she has no knowledge to speak of, in any commonplace sense.

In America, Willa Cather, with a lesser exquisiteness and a more obvious outlook on life, suffers a little in the same way, and sometimes confuses the refinement of the library for that precision of æsthetic good taste with which library lore has no connection; though "The Lost Lady" remains as a perfect example of delicate treatment which is a true accomplishmen

Dorothy Richardson and Katherine Mansfield, in their dissimilarity, possess too much of the clear selective feeling needed for art to be charged with a detrimental niceness, yet, with all that, neither has functioned effectively beyond a sphere of delicacies conventionally consecrated as "the feminine field." An anomalous contrast to the "province" of these two is the material of that perfect novel, "After Leaving Mr. MacKenzie," by Jean Rhys. This book, too, treats of experience in the female gender, and the author, perhaps more than any of her sisters, has purified her work of vulgarizing gentility. Though this is preeminently a woman's story, the art of Jean Rhys makes it chaste to sexlessness.

In America, the older generation has given us Edith Wharton, whose gentle elegance never drew on such robust resources as belonged to Henry James; and Ellen Glasgow, whose sharp intelligence plans to outwit the restrictions imposed on a Southern lady, deserves to succeed, and never does so completely. The Americans are not as subtle as Viola Meynell, whose tenuous perceptivity, nonetheless, estranges her from romantic power.

Of American women who are liberated in mind, yet retain faithfully a fastidious feminine aversion to the extravagances of direct emotional speech, Ruth Suckow, much younger, is the best. Without theoretic rebelliousness, without the taint of sacrosanct dramatization which has afflicted the genius of Sherwood Anderson, she interprets the Middle West with an unsentimental affection, and as unselfconsciously as Jane Austen interpreted provincial England.

American women, today (though not the majority) sometimes live in the midst of events to a degree which reflects accomplished emancipation, and when they are altogether free of the narcissism of feminine sex as it affects art, when they can write with a sexless judgment—and still without repugance—about sex along with other things, half the trick will be done. Kay Boyle is at least no more "feminine" than e. e. cummings, or many another sensitive artist aware of life in terms of weakness as well as strength. She and cummings, among American prose writers, have the truest exquisiteness, and Kay Boyle's poetry achieves major moods, which, for all the man's excruciating poignance, are beyond the scope of his wistful malice.

Women are freer, and they are less frightened of the heroic, which never should be, after all, the one goal for art. Elizabeth Madox Roberts, though she walks a little too softly, is an unequivocally romantic woman. So is Julia Peterkin, who, after striking a few beautiful chords, seems to become indolent and too dispassionate. Helen Grace Carlisle conceives very simple epics, which are affecting through the very modesty of the details that project them. Janet Lewis and Caroline Gordon bring, to the treatment of spacious canvases, sober and sophisticated grace. And Grace Lumpkin's sincere, unflinching narrative, challenging justice for the proletariat, though she, at no point, interests herself in character for longer than will serve her urgent mass purpose, sometimes unostentatiously beats heroic measures.

But there is no Faulkner to do romantic violence to our land, no Thomas Wolfe among women here, and, in England, no Lawrence. As a rule, when women become prose poets at all, it is with reservations.

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NATHAN DIGESTS THE THEATRE

"THE PERFUMED LADY" (*Harry Wagstaff Gribble*)—In this exhibit the author endeavored to do with sex what he did, and so happily, with other forms of dementia in "March Hares." He did not, except in portions of his third act, succeed, because in place of the gay hop skip and jump technique of the latter, he succumbed to one generally so pedestrian that what was intended to be evanescent flippancy was registered in the auditor's consciousness, by virtue of the time given him to think it over, as something vaguely approaching seriousness. The basic scheme of the play—a mad, idiotic sex hash in which all the characters found themselves involved with each other and almost everybody else—was a good one, and one or two of the episodes, notably the one in the last act in which the character of a commercially amorous and cynical pianist figured, were validly amusing. But the evening collapsed not only because of the author's emphasis of points which should have been so understated as to be almost out of ear-reach before even they were enunciated (as in the instance of "March Hares") but because, serving as director as well as author, he made the emphasis doubly emphatic by staging his play as if it were a troupe of comedians making a jump to the next stand in a one-horse shay. Originality of invention was also feeble, as in the employment of such antiquated devices as the tell-tale pair of gloves left behind in a room, the arousing of suspicion as to a departed visitor's identity by a remaining whiff of a familiar perfume, etc. This Gribble is a disappointing playwright. He began, some years ago, very encouragingly; in more recent years, in a play like "Revolt", he still indicated traces of ability; but since "March Hares" his work has not only steadily gone off but has shown, even through its stray patches of merit, a mind and technical aptitude that seem to be puzzlingly self-confused. His plays sound as if they had been carefully planned the night before a big party and written the day after with a hangover.

"New Faces" (*Viola Brothers Shore and Nancy Hamilton*)—An amateur show, professionally presented, with the stress misplaced, for the new faces, neither in the way of artistic expression nor pulchritude, offer an intoxication approaching that of such old ones as Marilyn Miller and Clifton Webb or such considerably older ones, for that matter, as Della Fox and Pete Dailey. But if the newness of the faces is nothing to make either Sarony or Edward E. Rice jump out of his grave, the novelty of some of the sketches, songs and jokes is a pleasantly unfamiliar phenomenon on the local music-show stage. True enough, we note on tap again such ancient friends as the saucy bedroom blackout, the arty dance number in which Harlequin, first revealed as a puppet, slowly comes to life, and the lady in Elizabethan court costume who sings a paradoxical modern ditty, but we observe against these an excellently comical burlesque on English actors, a humorous ferry boat skit, a funny song about a girl who loved to lie around in gutters, a good movie lampoon, and several other such fillips.

"Another Love" (*Jacques Deval*)—A translation of the French original known as "Etienne": the tale of a young boy who, by the exercise of a diplomatic technique that embraces everything from making love to his father's potential mistress to a simulated violent bellyache theoretically induced by having swallowed chlorine water, contrives to regain for his sweet and beloved mother (a damned bore to the audience) his philandering father's wayward affection, the whole providing about as dull and drowsy a theatrical evening as the educated mind can imagine. It becomes increasingly evident as the seasons pass that fewer and fewer of these French boulevard plays are longer suited to the advanced American stage. Their once "worldly sophistication" has come to have a juvenile ring; and their sex capers, once looked upon as very wicked and daring, today impress local audiences as the essence of innocence. Beside something like "Tobacco Road" the amorous little epigram-embroidered copulations of the modern French drama have the air of kindergarten pranks. And beside something like "Sailor, Beware!" even the present-day Palais Royal farces are pansies. What the French theatre needs for its commercial salvation, apparently, is a good dirty mind.

"The Shattered Lamp" (*Leslie Reade*)—The German nation has a lot to answer for as regards the art of the drama in late years. During the war it set dozens of Allied playwrights to confecting ham exhibits in which presumably silly-ass Englishmen turned out to be Secret Service masterminds who frustrated the plans of the German navy to land a million men at Portsmouth, or in which a loyal Frenchwoman, married to her husband for thirty-nine years, suddenly discovered to her horror that he was a German and in the pay of the Wilhelmstrasse. And now that Hitler is in power, it has set an equal number to composing an equal number of equally ham exhibits in which Jewish families, all paragons of virtue, find their peaceful homes invaded by a gruff blond Nazi captain of storm troopers at the end of the second act, are denounced as foul vermin, (to the loud hisses of the Yiddish balcony trade), and are either taken out to be shot or are driven to suicide, all to the accompaniment of much vituperative shouting and shattering of window-panes by a crowd of Nazi supers off-stage. The Nazi plays have even less variation than the war plays, and the examples that have seen thus far this season are, as drama, quite without trace of quality. "The Shattered Lamp," an English importation, was no exception to the rule.

"The Pure in Heart" (*John Howard Lawson*)—Mr. Lawson is a very ambitious, if defectively equipped, playwright who has spent his dramatic life vacillating between Greenwich Village and Hollywood and who has not been able to graduate from either. This play, a ridiculously fuddled and amateurish specimen, was a mixture of Greenwich Village sex and Cherry Lane experimentation on the one hand and of Hollywood theme song and Fox-lot fancy on the other. It was apparently Mr. Lawson's conviction that if he took the most commonplace and shopworn materials of the popular theatre and treated them to a revolving stage, some modernistic scenery, some off-stage music, and some elliptical acting, he could not only succeed in concealing his rank incompetence from the audience but might even persuade it to see in him a dramatist who had achieved—I quote his program note about himself—"a mood quite foreign to the realistic theatre" and who had brought "a certain sort of modern poetry into the theatre . . . not the poetry of blank verse and measured sentences . . . (but) the turbulent crude rhythm of the dynamic world in which we live." Alas for Mr. Lawson's pleasant confidence, his technique of concealment did not work, and his opus itself was duly concealed from the public's further view after just a few nights' showing.

"Gentlewoman" (*Ibid*)—The above and same Mr. Lawson here displayed his remarkable virtuosity by jumping at one leap from the expressionist-poetic, or whatever it was, drama to the more orthodox drama of philosophy, sociology and sex, and proved that he was entirely as incapable in the one as in the other. His idea of lending a new vitality to the old thematic corpse of the lady of high station who succumbs to the mentality and anatomical allure of a man of the people was to make his hero talk like a freshman radical and his proud lady like a Wampas Baby alumna. His idea of a novel moist dramatic situation was to bring in a loyal maid-servant and have her touchingly sob her intention of remaining with her mistress who found herself bankrupt and unable to pay further wages. His idea of a novel dramatic character was a butler who quietly allowed that he spent his spare time delving into various minor classics, and who surprised his male questioners with his philosophical acumen. His idea of humor consisted in such badinage as a remark about a lady-in-waiting and the query as to what she was waiting for. And his idea of fresh and piquant simile and metaphor took the form of allusions to "the eye of a dead cod-fish" and "the sex life of a clam."

"The House of Remsen" (*N. Soussanin, M. Baumer and W. J. Perlman*)—It would have been outmoded stuff twenty years ago.

"Moor Born" (*Dan Totherok*)—Feeble Brontë drama.

DICTIONARIES

by BURTON RASCOE

THE Brothers Fowler (H. W. and F. G.) were a unique pair, as brothers go in this world. Both of them had fine qualities of mind and temper; both were erudite, yet not pedantic; both had a sense of humor and a sense of style; and they collaborated with amity, and almost with perfection, on "The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English," and on their four volume translation of Lucian.

Perhaps H. W. is the better known of the two Fowler brothers, because it was H. W. who wrote "A Dictionary of Modern English Usage." This book is read by lovers of style as much as for the way in which H. W. expresses himself as for the information he imparts. There is no cant in that book. It is, implicitly, a treatise on good writing, bidding its readers to eschew the ornate, the affected, the otiose, and too-formal in diction. It is, in fact, so good as a treatise and as sheer literature that to find fault with it is a privilege which should be reserved to those who honor it highly.

I count myself among these. Among my innocent hobbies is that of collecting and inspecting dictionaries. I do not count myself a connoisseur of dictionaries: I merely find a degree of pleasure in seeing the mistakes that can be made by lexicographers. (There are, by the way, four type errors in the first volume of the "Oxford English Dictionary.") The explanation for this hobby of mine is easy enough: I honor accuracy as much as any one, but accuracy, I hold, is especially valuable in the field of physics, chemistry, geology and mathematics; in the realm of thought and imagination a misplaced date or a misspelled name means little; the feeling and the impression conveyed mean much. There are no seacoasts of Bohemia, and stout Cortez could hardly see the Pacific from a peak in Darien; but, none the less, the phrases used by Shakespeare and Keats are more accurate (in the realm of the imagination) than a purely geographical report on the boundaries of Bohemia or a relief map of the Americas.

Accuracy in a dictionary and accuracy in a manual of style, are, however, as desirable as accuracy in a work on physics or mathematics. It is my painful duty, as an unpedantic pedant (in some things), to point out that "The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English," by the Messrs. H. W. and F. G. Fowler, for all their charm as literary men, is for Americans one of the least reliable of all small-sized, desk-dictionaries. It shrieks with omissions of words commonly used; it gives pronunciations which are insupportable to Americans; and it gives definitions of words which an American will find bewildering.

I have three antipathies in style. Any one of them is sufficient to produce upon me an effect equal to the rasp of a handsaw on sandpaper. They are the use of the hanging participle, the use of the plural to follow "none," and the use of "due to" or "due to the fact" for "owing to."

The Fowlers make all of these errors. This is all the more remarkable in that, in "A Dictionary of Modern English Usage," we find these statements:

"**due.** Under the influence of Analogy, *due to* is often used by the illiterate as though it had passed, like *owing to*, into a mere compound preposition. In all the examples below *owing* would stand, but *due*, which must like ordinary participles & adjectives be attached to a noun, & not to a notion extracted from a sentence, is impossible; it is not the horse, the rooks, he, the articles, or Lostwithiel, that are due, but the failure of the movement, the distrust of the rooks, & so on:—*The old trade union movement is a dead horse, largely d. to the incompetency of the leaders. / Rooks, probably d. to the fact that they have been so often shot at, have a profound distrust of man. / D. largely to his costume, he suggested a respectable organist. / Some articles have increased in price, d. to the increasing demand. / As an example I take the name of Lostwithiel, surely a beautiful sound, & in my case not d. to pleasant memories, as I have never been there.*"

In "A Dictionary of Modern English Usage" there is a long passage on dangling participles, and yet, in the introduction to the translation by the Fowler brothers of Lucian, I find this sentence:

"His maternal uncle being a statuary, he was apprenticed to him, having shown an aptitude for modelling in the wax that he surreptitiously scraped from his school writing-tablets."

In this same introduction I find this sentence:

"None of these are dialogues; but they are all less perfect devices to secure the same object, the putting of two views that the man of detached mind recognizes on every question."

It is true that in "A Dictionary of Modern English Usage," the Fowlers say:

"**none.** It is a mistake to suppose that the pronoun is sing. only & must at all costs be followed by sing. verbs; the OED explicitly states that pl. construction is commoner."

And bad 'cess, say I, to the OED. "None" is a contraction of "no one" and to make "no one" the subject of a plural verb seems odious to me. If common usage in error is to make a usage valid, then there is no need for a book like "A Dictionary of Modern English Usage," because we all can make our own rules for saying whatever we have to say.

In "A Dictionary of Modern English Usage," H. W. Fowler commits an abomination which always distresses me, not only because of its tautology, but because of its cacophony. He is an inveterate "and-whicher":

"**irrelevant.** It is stated in the OED, which does not often volunteer such remarks, & which is sure to have documentary evidence, that 'a frequent blunder is *irrevalent*'; that form, however, does not get into print once for a hundred times that it is said; but it is not difficult, with a little fishing, to extract it from ladies."

The fact that ladies (women) sometimes say "irrevalent" when they mean "irrelevant" does not seem to me half so bad as using a "which" that is entirely unnecessary. Doesn't that sentence read better if it is written: "It is stated in the OED, which does not often volunteer such remarks and is sure to have documentary evidence," than it reads with a "which"?

"A Dictionary of Modern English Usage" gives rules for pronunciation and spelling which my ear and mind will not countenance. I approve of their putting an "e" into the word which American dictionaries ordinarily spell "judgment." But for the same reason I like "judgement" in preference to "judgment", I dislike the Fowler spelling of "hingeing" as "hinging" and "changeing" as "changing". "H-i-n-g-i-n-g" spells "hinging" with a hard "g". The added "e" softens the "g" as in "judgement". If we do not recognize this it should be necessary to use a "j" in all instances where we now have a "g" followed by a vowel.

In fine, the Fowlers were mighty fellows, but they also made mistakes.

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